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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000426

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DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: KYRGYZ PRESIDENT'S CHIEF OF STAFF: RELATIONS WILL IMPROVE

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Classified By: Amb. Marie L. Yovanovitch, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary. SCA DAS Evan Feigenbaum discussed the current political situation, prospects for Kyrgyzstan's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) Threshold Country Program, and the state of bilateral relations on April 17 with newly-appointed Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov. Sadyrkulov confidently predicted the government would reach a compromise with the opposition that would avoid violence on the streets. He said opposition leader Kulov had overplayed his hand. On MCC, Sadyrkulov said he would retain his role as coordinator, and pledged to look at steps Kyrgyzstan could take now to demonstrate the political will to combat corruption. Bilateral relations, said Sadyrkulov, will be much better under PM Atambayev and with himself as Presidency Chief of Staff: "Now all the ministers report to me," Sadyrkulov said. End Summary.

Internal Politics

12. (C) On April 17, SCA DAS Evan Feigenbaum met with recently-appointed Presidential Chief of Staff Medet Sadyrkulov, who was late arriving due to having just been called in to see President Bakiyev. Sadyrkulov said they had discussed the request by opposition parliamentarians to introduce some additional changes in the constitution proposed by the working group under Prime Minister Atambayev. Sadyrkulov said that the President had "no problem" with the proposals. He was confident the opposition and government would reach a "mutual understanding."

13. (C) The one problem, Sadyrkulov noted, was opposition leader Kulov -- he cannot be Prime Minister again, as he

desparately wants, but will not accept any other post. Sadyrkulov said, "we" will be talking with Kulov, maybe directly. Sadyrkulov said the President was not viewing this as a zero-sum game; the opposition (and Kulov) had made some big mistakes, but the President is open to their input into the draft constitution.

It's not about the constitution

14. (C) In fact, it's not about the constitution, Sadyrkulov continued, it's about Kulov's demand that the President must resign. Sadyrkulov claimed that when he heard Kulov announce that the President must resign, he knew that Kulov had "lost." The opposition wants the President to resign, but they have no reason for the demand. The President has offered many concessions: the opposition wanted First Deputy PM Usenov to go; he is gone. They wanted Prosecutor General Kongantiev to go; he is gone. They wanted constitutional reform; Bakiyev set up a working group under the PM. They wanted state TV to be independent; Bakiyev reversed an earlier veto and signed the law to make this happen.

15. (C) In response to a question from DAS Feigenbaum, Sadyrkulov offered assurances that the government intended to follow through with these reforms. He said Kyrgyzstan was committed to democracy; there was no other way. He said the final outcome of the current crisis will be bad for Kulov. Kulov created this situation, with his unrealistic demand for resignation of the President. Unlike in November, when the demonstrators included intelligentsia, this time the opposition has been able to turn out only uneducated, vodka-drinking youths. If Kulov is shown to completely fail, it will be good for Kyrgyzstan.

U.S.: Peaceful, Lawful Resolution Key

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16. (C) DAS Feigenbaum reiterated the U.S. position that that the Kyrgyz themselves resolve their political issues without violence, in a lawful and constitutional manner. He noted that President Bakiyev, as an elected official, was on strong legal grounds not to resign. But, as a political matter, he asked Sadyrkulov how would Kyrgyzstan develop some political stability -- would it be able to give all the players a stake in a stable system? Sadyrkulov responded that he and other government leaders were now considering these issues. He was confident they would find a peaceful resolution with the opposition. He noted that PM Atambayev had chaired a government meeting where a resolution was taken not to arm the police -- this was a firm commitment to non-violence.

Fewer mistakes in government?

17. (C) Sadyrkulov said that he was optimistic we would see improvement in how the government operates, and improved ties with the United States. He claimed he had received approval from the President to enhance the economic expertise of the Presidential Administration, and was planning to bring in an English-speaking expert from the Ministry of Finance. He said we should see "fewer mistakes" with Atambayev as Prime Minister and himself running the Presidential Administration. He indicated there were some "enemies" -- such as State Advisor Usen Sydykov -- but that he, Sadyrkulov, was now in charge and we would see a difference.

Let's Move Ahead with Millenium Challenge Corporation

18. (C) DAS Feigenbaum asked if Sadyrkulov would maintain his responsibilities as MCC Coordinator for Kyrgyzstan, with his new responsibilities as Chief of Staff. Sadyrkulov replied, "If necessary, yes." DAS Feigenbaum urged him to do so, noting that he would provide continuity of leadership, demonstrate political will, and have proximity to the President. Sadyrkulov committed to stay in charge of MCC, and noted that he wants to move ahead with the Threshold

Country Program, and hoped the MCC Board would make a positive decision to fund it. He acknowledged that recent political instability could raise doubts about Kyrgyz political will, but said with his new authority, there should be no problems. He said he had reached out and planned to include some lawyers and experts from the opposition on his MCC team. DAS Feigenbaum conveyed to Sadyrkulov a list of proposed actions the Kyrgyz could take now to demonstrate their political will to take steps against corruption. Sadyrkulov said he would call a meeting of the U.S.-Kyrgyz MCA working group as a first step.

Whither U.S.-Kyrgyz relations

¶9. (C) DAS Feigenbaum asked Sadyrkulov how he viewed bilateral relations. Sadyrkulov replied, "They are going to be very good." He said that last year there were problems, but he attributed much of the misunderstanding to the incompetence of individuals who are no longer in government. He summarized by saying both sides will need to monitor relations, but "things should be okay."

Positive Comments on Manas Air Base

¶10. (C) DAS Feigenbaum previewed for Sadyrkulov the message he had prepared regarding the Manas Air Base incidents for use in both private and public comments in Kyrgyzstan. Sadyrkulov said, "What you outlined sounds reasonable to Kyrgyz ears." He added that in his previous job as Deputy

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Chief of Staff, he was not responsible for base issues and was not briefed up. Now, he would need to be informed. He said he held views similar to those of DAS Feigenbaum; but said there were still some problems to resolve; still, he was confident they could be dealt with successfully. He said some agencies still had concerns about the base -- mostly a lack of understanding -- and he would work with them to "smooth things out." Before, he said, as Deputy Chief of Staff, he would hear ministers say things about the base that he knew were incorrect, but he could not say anything. Now, as Chief of Staff, he can speak up. He reiterated President Bakiyev's statement last week to former Senator Dole of support for the base and its continued operations. "We have some small problems yet to resolve," he said with the hint of a smile, "but now all the ministers report to me."

¶11. (U) This cable was cleared by SCA DAS Feigenbaum.
YOVANOVITCH